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WHOM DO YOU WORSHIP?

A POPULAR TREATISE

ON

REASONABLE RELIGION.

BY

HENRY A. ABRAHAM.

New York:
JAMES MILLER, PUBLISHER,
522 Broadway.
1867.

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THE AUTHOR

TO HIS PARENTS.

1867.

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Preface.

The writer humbly trusts that the following address will be a stepping-stone for many from the Trinitarian to the Unitarian Faith; but, however that may be, should it be the means of gaining but one sincere convert to the religion he advocates, he will not have written in vain. With such eloquence as he possesses, the writer herein appeals to individual common-sense, and entreats the reader to admit the full power of his reason to an investigation of his present actual religious sentiments. Reader, let not Mystery have any sway over your mind; let Reason be enthroned, and let free inquiry be your governing spirit. Thus will more honor be done to God, and you, my friend, become more worthy to be called His rational creature.

H. A. A.

New York, January, 1867.

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WHOM DO YOU WORSHIP?

In this age of earnest and searching inquiry, when man is not content with that knowledge which he may be enabled to acquire solely from the testimony of others, but insists on reading, thinking, comparing, and reasoning for himself, ignoring sophisms which, when once they take the place of truth or fact in the mind, become almost more dangerous than utter ignorance, it would seem that a time must come to most Christian people whose custom it has been to render humble and grateful thanks to Heaven for their daily bread and hourly blessings, more especially if they have enjoyed the advantages necessary for a proper cultivation of the mind and the growth of that reasoning power which directs the will of man, when they would say to themselves, " Are we quite clear as to our

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religious belief? To whom do we address our prayers? Why do we attend this church or that chapel? Is the faith we profess established by sufficient testimony to satisfy us that it is the right one? Is it one we have sought for ourselves, and after deep and anxious thought on the subject pronounced to be reconcilable with truth and satisfying to our reason? Or is it one we are content to follow because we have had perfect faith in our spiritual advisers, and the integrity of those who have been our guardians, who have had our best interests at heart, and to whom we have been indebted for religious instruction and counsel?"

Doubtless the honest answer of very many would be: "It is true we have depended on our natural guardians, and have been taught by those whom we considered to have been possessed of the best information, and whom we had reason to believe were worthy people, and earnest in their belief, that ours is the true faith, the one on which our eternal welfare depends, and that it therefore behoves us to hold it tenaciously, and to believe implicitly in the teachings and tenets of the Church even should we, in our readings of Holy Scripture, meet with passages which force on our conviction the fact that what is taught therein annihilates the greater part of that creed in

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the belief of which we have been told our eternal happiness depends."

But there are many to whose minds these questions might occur who, on the very threshold of their investigations, are drawn back by some worldly motive or consideration, and endeavour to rid their minds for a time of all doubts on the subject, almost preferring a blank to the harassing and painful thoughts which must fill their minds with regard to the genuineness of their faith. Thus may we follow them in their thoughts. That such doubts do occur and are driven back from time to time, either with the determination that they shall not be solved at all, or with a vague intention that at some future day of leisure they shall be set at rest, let those who read this address bear testimony.

But alas! how many are there who do clear up these doubts? How many are there who, from timidity or indolence, are content to pass their lives in an actual state of doubt as to their religious profession? How many thousands and tens of thousands of those who throng the churches of our cities have appeared to satisfy their consciences by saying, when any doubts have arisen in their minds, "Our parents were of this faith before us; they were good people, and we cannot do better than to follow their example;" or, "We were

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brought up in this faith; those who are better and wiser than we tell us we are on the right road to salvation, and thus we allow no doubt to arise in our minds." Or it may be urged: "We have been taught to believe such things, and this belief is now a part of ourselves, and we do not wish to investigate that which may possibly turn our faith;" or again, "We have read the Bible all our lives, but have considered it impious to search for flaws or contradictions which might possibly shake our faith; we believe such and such things because we wish to believe them; they seem to us good enough, and if there is anything we do not understand, we are content to know that our spiritual advisers *do* understand them and recommend them to our belief."

Thus do many content themselves with a religion on sufferance. But how delusive is this quasi contentment, and this shifting of a serious responsibility to others' shoulders: how entirely incompatible with human nature that the mind could rest satisfied without good grounds for a belief, and one, moreover, which should arise from strict personal investigation, looking to ourselves alone for a conscientious solution of our doubts.

If a man direct his mind at all to the subject, he cannot rest quietly under a fictitious belief, more es-

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pecially when it is ever brought forcibly before him from the pulpit that his hope of salvation depends on the nature of that belief. No; as well might we expect the philosopher to be content to hear that certain results have been obtained in science, without an investigation on his part to learn the causes which produced those results or effects.

Would he not feel that every difficulty and obligation must be properly and fairly met before he could give implicit reliance to whatever had been set forth as facts?

If, then, man so thirsts after the matters appertaining to this world, how much more devotedly should he apply himself to the study of that which is to acquaint him with heavenly truths!

Who, after deliberation, would assert that he does not feel himself responsible for his religious belief? And, assuming that you acknowledge this responsibility and are devoutly anxious to quiet those doubts which must present themselves, does it not occur to you, reader, that the only way to arrive at this important end is by the employment of your reasoning power, which will enable you to compare that which is obscure with generally admitted truths?

Above all things let not Prejudice, that great an-

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tagonist of Truth, dim the light of reason; for, loving our own opinions as we do, we are apt almost unconsciously to admit as truth that which cannot be properly justified simply because it is pleasant to believe it.

Whatever may be the issue of a Christian's investigations with regard to religious matters, if honestly held and earnestly carried out, though he may be deemed by some a wanderer from actual truth, yet it is not man's province to censure him, or raise a doubt as to his ultimate fitness for an immortal life. Whatever may be the obligations of a Christian man, most certainly it is wrong to use harsh invective against those who differ from him. Yet it does behoove him earnestly and patiently to acquaint his fellow man, whom he considers in the wrong path, with the nature of his belief, the reason he has for holding it and believing it to be the right one, and he is but fulfilling a duty when he is using all his eloquence to obtain converts to a religion that he loves, and concerning the truth of which he has not a doubt.

It is for this reason the writer has set himself the pleasant task of offering, in a spirit of love, to any who will have patience with him, some observations concerning the Unitarian faith, and what he considers to be the errors into which Trinitarians have fallen;

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and he is the more anxious to offer these remarks to their notice since he is aware that, in spite of the excellent works that have been written on the subject of Unitarianism, still its professors are misunderstood and misrepresented, and, he grieves to say, have been even ranked by the thoughtless and the ignorant with the Mahomedan and the Atheist.

Yet it is not the purpose of this address to show how much, or in what manner, the Unitarians have been misjudged, for it is sincerely hoped that none who will carefully read these pages, however much they may have been mistaken hitherto, will still remain ignorant of the principles of the Unitarian faith.

By a careful study of the Bible the Unitarian finds therein distinct evidence that *one* alone is God; for although, in a few instances, the pronouns referring to Divinity are written in the plural number, these are exceptional, and throughout the Holy Writings it is to be seen that God is spoken of as *He*. When he speaks the pronoun *I* is used, and our Saviour ever addressed him as *Thou*.

Now reason clearly points to the fact that in the New Testament is to be found all that is necessary to our belief, because therein is given the life of Christ, who came to give us religion; nor is it absolutely a sine

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qua non, although very right and excellent, to study the Bible from first to last, in order to establish a belief.

Even with regard to the New Testament itself, the student of Divinity must expect to find some few verbal discrepancies in the histories of our Lord, since they were written at different times and places, and by different persons. But of this one great fact there can be no doubt: that our Saviour came to tell mankind of God's wondrous power and tender love, and to teach them how to offer up their prayers and thanksgivings to their Heavenly Father, and how to live that they might not fear to die.

Not for one moment, as is imagined by some Trinitarians, does the Unitarian derogate from the perfect qualities of Christ, or question the truth of what he taught; but, on the contrary, it is on his (Christ's) teachings that he founds his belief.

Now since the four Evangelists who wrote the history of our Lord in the main agree, therefore is it evident that in these gospels must be found all that is necessary to enable a Christian to shape his belief. Although this rational conclusion may well be admitted, we should not neglect the evidence of the epistles, or the study of any historical part of the Bible; for most of the teachings therein contained are invaluable

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aids to piety, as well as to religious disquisition. It is simply affirmed that the four gospels contain sufficient matter to determine any man with regard to his proper mode of worship, for have we not to deal with what Christ himself taught us, and have we not to determine, by our own individual reasoning, how much clear evidence can be admitted to prove that Christ taught us to worship *three* Gods, and on the other hand, how much evidence that he directed us to devote ourselves to *one* God?

With regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, however much learned professors of the faith may have differed in their modes of arriving at the doctrine; whether they be followers of Sabellius, whose theory, according to the explanation of eminent Trinitarian writers, was first to consider God as their Creator, in the second place their Redeemer, "a perfect God and perfect man," and thirdly as their Sanctifier, or in other words the Holy Ghost; or whether they be those who resolve the Godhead into three distinct Minds, Powers, or, as Dr. Wardlaw, an eminent defender of Trinitarianism has it, "Persons," as also it is in the Church Service; yet Trinitarianism resolves itself into this great fact, that the mass of believers profess that in the Godhead are three distinct "Persons," to whom

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are to be offered their devotions, and at the same time that these *three* distinct persons are *One*.

Unitarianism is a belief in One God alone, the mighty Ruler of the Universe.

That no doubt may arise in the mind of the reader of the truth of what is here asserted, the writer quotes the Trinitarian and Unitarian beliefs that are universally accepted by each church. They cannot be read too carefully, in order that a clear distinction may ever be before the student's mind during his religious researches. Since the Bible is the standard of the Unitarian belief, I have quoted the explanation of Dr. Lant Carpenter (in reply to Archbishop Magee, p. 22), feeling assured that it exactly explains the belief and sentiments which pervade the Unitarian Church.

Trinitarian Belief.

The Catholic Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is *one* person of the Father, *another* of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all

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one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.... The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal; and yet there are not *three* eternals but *one* eternal.... So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not *three* Gods, but *one* God.

The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is *one* Father, not *three* Fathers; *one* Son, not *three* Sons; *one* Holy Ghost, not *three* Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before or after the other, none is greater or less than another, but the whole three persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.

Athanasian Creed.

Unitarian Belief.

The Unitarians universally believe not only that there is *one* God, but that God is *one;* that Jehovah, the Creator of Heaven and Earth and all things there-

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in—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is one, in substance indivisible, in being underived and independent, in power unequaled, supremely great and infinitely wise, all holy, all just, and all gracious, the only true God. This all perfect Being, the Father of mercies and of all consolation, whose essential character is love, they believe to be the sole original source of every good and perfect gift; his grace and mercy the spring of all the inestimable blessings we derive from the Gospel; his unerring wisdom and constant agency the cause of all the means by which the gracious scheme of Salvation through Christ was executed and permanently diffused.... This Great and Gracious Being they believe to be the *only* proper object of religious worship.

These two facts, therefore, being thus established, it will be necessary to consult the Scriptures in order to ascertain what evidence exists in support of either doctrine, examining them without prejudice, not allowing ourselves to be biassed by the observations of any commentator, but keeping in mind that we have to weigh one theory against the other, for our *own satisfaction* and peace of mind, and not for the *gratification*

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of *others;* let us cast aside all texts and matters foreign to our purpose, and above all rid our minds, for the time at least, of those *articles of religion* established by man, while we deal *alone* with what Christ taught, and the manner in which his words have been described by the Evangelists.

The Unitarian believes that Jesus Christ was a man, a man "without sin," endowed by God with Godly power, how nearly akin to his Heavenly Father's it is not man's to know. He finds the clearest evidence to prove that Christ and his disciples taught no other doctrine, and he can but marvel at the establishment of any other, in the face of what our Saviour distinctly said to his persecutors: "But now ye seek to kill me, a *man* that hath told you the truth which I have heard of God"—even supposing that this assertion were not supported as it is throughout the New Testament.

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge: and my judgment is just because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which hath sent me," said our Saviour to those around him.

Simple, straightforward, and incapable of subversion as these words are, yet Trinitarianism struggles to annihilate their pure and rational meaning.

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The metaphor which Christ employed occasionally, is greedily seized on and used as an argument in favor of the Trinitarian creed. For example, the text, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. The Father is in me, and I in him," is received in its literal sense, and not simply as an expression of his intimate union with God; that what he taught was dictated by Him whose spirit was ever with his Son.

Let us consider how Christ prayed to his Father for unity of spirit among his disciples, we shall then be the better enabled to imbibe the proper sense of the above words. He said, "As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," namely, that as God had endowed him, Christ, with His holy spirit, so he prayed might his beloved disciples be similarly blest.

It cannot be too strongly urged here that the searcher after truth should be thoroughly satisfied that he has attributed the most rational meaning to those words which are to be found in the New Testament relating to "union," and he should bear in mind that in order to discover its proper application much earnest and quiet thought is necessary.

Now, with reference to the foregoing passages, since Christ made use of words which convey the same

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meaning in each case, it the expression, "As thou Father art in me and I in thee," is adduced to prove Christ's personal identity with God, we might quite as properly infer that the words, "That they also may be one in us," imply a union of person in connection with those prayed for, which is absurd.

Surely no great deliberation is necessary therefore to satisfy us that this "union" is simply a spiritual one. The application is as beautiful as it is simple, for cannot we say, with reverence, that all really good people are in this wise one, or at peace, with God.

When Scriptural writings admit of such goodly and pure interpretations, how does it happen that they meet with so little consideration from our Trinitarian friends? Most strange is it that while they are so determinedly opposed to anything but a very literal interpretation of those few texts on which they base their religion, yet they entirely ignore the very many which can be adduced in support of the Unitarian faith.

With regard to those texts which are not taken literally, I have only to say that Christ himself told his followers in many instances that he spoke to them in parables, and that this shows the necessity of looking for hidden meanings, such meanings, however, to be compatible with truth and reason.

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Work after work has appeared from the pens of the most gifted writers, to establish that while in the main the Scriptures form an authentic record of divine doctrines, yet that errors have crept in and texts have been perverted.

Some allowance must be made also for partialities and inaccuracies in translation.

Nevertheless, without having recourse to those texts which are acknowledged by Trinitarian and Unitarian commentators to be of doubtful origin, the Unitarian finds more than one hundred texts accepted as indisputable alike by professors of Unity and Trinity. At present we will confine ourselves principally to what our Saviour taught of God and himself.

In his sermon on the Mount (*Matt. cap.* 7, *v.* 21) Christ distinctly speaks of *his* Father in heaven, "but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Also (*Matt. cap.* 10, *v.* 33), his words, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before man, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven," clearly disprove his personal identity with God. And again, what can be stronger evidence of non-equality than his exclamation (*Matt. cap.* 11, *v.* 25, 26, 27), "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast *hid these things* from the wise and prudent, and

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hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

According to the theory of the Trinity, the only meaning which can be reasonably applied to the foregoing words would be, My *earthly* part, or being, offers thanks to my *heavenly* part or being, because that part of me which is God *has hidden these things*, etc.; which is obviously absurd.

It is easy to say, "it is not given us to understand these things;" but what educated mind is so formed that it can conscientiously believe this to be the case? Surely religion must be a subject above all others which most calls forth the reasoning powers of man. Who does not know, if he probe his inmost feelings, that it *is* given him to exercise his judgment and clear from his mind a painful mystery, which like a nightmare must haunt him, if he think at all deeply on the subject, with the questions, "To whom do I daily offer my devotions? Have I a distinct idea of a Triune Being? Do I, from my soul, believe that Christ taught me to address my prayers to him as one of three Gods? Did he bid me worship *three Gods*, and

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at the same time tell me that these three Gods were *one?*

The reader is entreated to ponder over and answer this question satisfactorily to himself.

But I anticipate the answers of very many of you. You say, you have thought, you have pondered, you have stretched your reason to its utmost limits, and the mystery is still there; you are not satisfied; you feel that this is a subject which you should understand —which it is your *especial duty* to know—and yet the doubt remains.

Well then, I say to you, now is the exact moment for you to look for that which you *can* understand. Now is the time to examine a religion which will cleave to your inmost soul, a religion where there is no mystery, where all is clear as daylight, and which will call forth the deepest, tenderest, and purest emotions—the deep unutterable love for the one only God, our Father in heaven.

It is clearly man's duty to interpret Scripture reasonably, because it is within his reason, and he cannot plead ignorance as he fairly could of the manner of divine existence, or of the union of his soul with his body. These indeed are not given us to know, but we have no right to establish an impossible theory on

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that account and force ourselves to *believe* it because we do not *understand* it.

We believe that God is all perfect, just and wise, and because we have been told by our Saviour that he is one, believe that also; but we have not been told that there are three Gods, and it is therefore not compatible with reason to establish such a belief.

Ever in an humble manner did our Saviour obey the will of his Father, ever telling his disciples that he was divinely directed and inspired, and rebuking those who did him too much homage.

"And behold one came and said unto him, Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, why callest thou me good, there is none good but one, that is God, but if thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments." (*Matt. cap.* 19, *v.* 16, 17.)

Here Christ plainly states that the only really good being is God. In his humbleness of spirit and devotion he would not acknowledge his own excellence. How unreasonable, therefore, to imagine that he could be co-equal with God.

While admonishing his disciples on their conduct, our Saviour again clearly leads us to believe not only that he was *not* God, but that he was totally *distinct*

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from God; for he says, "And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father which is in Heaven. Neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ." (*Matt. cap.* 22, *v.* 9, 10.)

Is not this a clear distinction; twist and turn these words as we may, can we give them any other meaning? Clearly not.

At that silent hour when, in his mortal anguish, Christ prayed his Heavenly Father that the bitter cup might pass from him, can any one of us dare to say that our Saviour was not distinct from God? Would not *God on earth* have the same power as *God in heaven?* Is it not blasphemy to say that God prayed to himself, the all-powerful Ruler of the Universe—prayed for the non-fulfillment of that which he had himself irrevocably ordained should come to pass!

When led to Caiaphas, the high priest, and solemnly adjured by him to state who he was, what answer did Christ make? Caiaphas said, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tellest us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of *power*, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (*Matt.* 26, *v.* 63, 64.)

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In what sense are we to take the word "*power?*" If in a Trinitarian sense, then did Christ declare he would sit on his own right hand, but if in a Unitarian sense, on the right hand of God. Which is the more reasonable, which the more beautiful interpretation? Let every thinking man for himself decide; no further commentary of mine is needed.

If it were possible still to believe in the divinity of Christ, his agonized exclamation on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," should bring the truth before the greatest sceptic. I dare do no more than to quote Christ's words on the cross, for even to discuss the orthodox quibble, that although Christ *was* God he did not die *as* God, would be almost lending myself to blasphemy!

Let me now direct your attention to the manner in which Christ was himself addressed and spoken of by his disciples, and apostles, in order that you may see what their own ideas were concerning Christ and God.

Hear what Paul taught in his Epistle to the Romans. He not only defined Christ as the Son of God but he stated that Christ received power from God, and offered his thanks to God through Jesus Christ, for the faith of the Romans.

Honestly state your convictions as to the meaning

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of Paul when he said, "If we believed on *him* that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." (*Romans, cap.* 4, *v.* 24.)

To whom does the pronoun "Him" refer, if not to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

In the fourth chapter of Romans Paul again speaks of Christ as a "man," and further on he says, "But if the spirit of Him, which raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you." Thus clearly showing that in his (Paul's) own mind there was not a doubt as to God's superior and distinct personification.

In vain may we search Paul's epistles for any evidence in favor of the Trinity. Everything clearly points to one God. He concludes his Epistles to the Romans by saying: "To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ forever."

In his Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says, "And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (*Cap.* 3, *v.* 23.)

Peter says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," at the opening of his first Epistle, and in the second he says, in speaking of Christ: "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

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In much stronger terms does John write: "No man hath seen God at any time." (*John* 4, *v.* 12.)

Had John formed the least conception that Christ was God, would he have hazarded such an assertion as the foregoing? The theory imputed to John by some biblical scholars, and stated by a great majority to be an interpolation, viz., that "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost," is so marvellously inconsistent with his own teachings, and those of the other Evangelists, that the Unitarian cannot for one moment entertain it.

Suppose, reader, that you have to satisfy your mind on some point which greatly affects your happiness and chances of success in this world, and that your mode of action is to be determined by the evidence of certain witnesses; then if the assertion of one excellent person who loves you, and has your interest at heart, were upheld by the evidence of many, would your confidence be shaken by *one* witness who but in part disagreed with the others, especially if he were in the same breath to give you two different versions of the matter in question? Your answer being, as I must imagine, in the negative, I say to you, how much greater reason have you to believe that anything but what Christ taught must be taken at little value, when

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we have such witnesses as Matthew, Mark and Luke to bear record of his teachings!

Similarly, should you be collecting historical facts, and an incident be narrated by several authors in like manner, would you count it less a fact because in one solitary instance the writer's account would admit of two interpretations. Would there remain a vestige of a doubt in your mind as to its authenticity? Then why should you give the benefit of the doubt, if doubt could be assumed to exist, to the one unruly text of Scripture which is ambiguously expressed?

I cannot too earnestly set forth the fact that Unitarians desire nothing better than a full investigation of the Scriptures; indeed, they have ever felt that nothing but a diligent study of the New Testament will bring converts to their faith.

You may be well assured that the New Testament, as you can all read it, is your proper guide; for although it may be necessary, in order to satisfy yourselves of the exact sense of any particular verse of the New Testament wherein commentators disagree, to translate from the original text, yet without doubt the authorized English version is all-sufficient for the purpose of forming our belief. If it were not so, in what a dilemma would those be who have not the

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knowledge of Greek, or the time at their disposal for its proper acquirement. Remember it is on the English version that Trinitarianism is founded, as is also the Unitarian faith, and we should do very wrong were we to raise a doubt as to its genuineness because a few interpolations and mistranslations, not at all affecting what Christ taught, are to be met with. Some translators have given more patient attention to the original text than have others, and pre-eminent among these earnest searchers after divine truth competent judges rank Griesbach, Schott and Knapp.

Now, concerning the proper mode of studying the Scriptures, our great desire should be to give as literal a meaning as is possible to every word, and only when we meet with some *one* passage which refutes what is asserted throughout the New Testament should we come to the reasonable conclusion that this contradictory passage must either have a figurative sense, or be considered an interpolation.

None are more anxious to uphold with reverence the name of Christ than the Unitarian. He does not, as is generally supposed, attempt to hide the pure and holy qualities of the Saviour who by his wondrous teachings brought mankind nearer to God; but as he can find no evidence whatever to show that Christ was

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God, but, on the contrary, much to prove that he was not, especially his own earnest denial that he was more than his Father's appointed agent, the Unitarian cannot but be thoroughly convinced that however nearly akin Christ might be to the true God, yet he was not God himself.

Utterly disregarding the distinct denial of Christ, utterly discarding the manner in which God is spoken of in a thousand passages of Holy Writ, namely, as "One," Trinitarians pick out from the Old and New Testament one or two passages where God is spoken of in the plural number and thereon establish their creed. I refer the reader to (*Gen.* 1, *v.* 26), and (*Gen.* 2, *v.* 7), and assuming the doctrine of plenary inspiration (a subject not needful for discussion here) to be generally accepted, and that God's voice was heard from Heaven, it is not to be marvelled at that the text should have been so rendered, since, from the fact of most great rulers in ancient times having been spoken of by writers in the plural number, the scriptural writer may have adopted the usual form in speaking of the Almighty Ruler of the World.

There is nothing in the heavens we can see, and nothing in the earth which points in any way to a plurality of Gods. The blade of grass; the lovely and

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tender flower, with its delicate apparatus so wonderfully fashioned that it may be reproduced from year to year; the wondrous oak, which rises in proud majesty from the one tiny acorn; the glorious sun of heaven, the moon, the stars—all speak most eloquently of one Great Power, one incomprehensible Mind that has created them. If more than one God had been engaged in the creation of the world and its government, would there not have been some confusion in the workings of nature? But as it is, we know that all is beautiful harmony pointing to *perfect unity.*

Can the Trinitarian possibly satisfy himself that he is doing honor to God when he makes it appear that Christ purposely misled and beguiled his disciples with regard to his identity? For if Christ were God, even assuming that he spake in his human nature, would he have been so false to the principles of truth as to have said, "Of that day and hour knoweth not the Son," when in his Godly nature he must have known all things? This would imply a deceit *impossible* to the perfection of Deity, and to which it would be *most impious* to give a *moment's* credence.

Among the few texts which Trinitarians quote as being the very strongholds of their faith, the following, taken "per se," perhaps needs some comment, or we

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might be justly accused of that very partiality, which, in the first pages of this book, was set down as being so antagonistic to the pursuit of truth, although being an antithesis to our Saviour's words last quoted, they might perhaps have been passed over without observation: "The Word, which was God became flesh, and dwelt among us." The Unitarian thus explains this metaphor: God imbued Christ with his Holy Spirit that he might convey it to mankind. To affirm, from this verse, that Christ was God, is equivalent to stating, either that our Saviour misled his disciples, or that we must give no credence to the Scriptural Record. But no, here reason steps in, and we are enabled by analogy to interpret the passage fairly, and satisfy our minds that Christ was perfect and the writers truthful, however much in the scriptural record language might be at fault.

In the same way John evidently intended to convey to his readers the meaning that God's Holy Spirit pervaded everything from the beginning, the spirit which was manifested in Jesus Christ, and giving life to all things, then, now, and forever.

Thus rendered, the passage does no violence to man's reason, and is intelligible to the most ordinary intellect; but if the sense is distorted in order to sup-

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port a theory at which reason revolts, and is blindly accepted as truth, there is little hope that a fair inquiry will be instituted.

To those who *will* listen to the voice of reason, who *cannot* blindly believe, to those who feel that the holding of honest convictions is alone acceptable in the sight of Heaven, I now appeal, most earnestly entreating them to investigate that faith which is intelligible to them, and after a diligent study of the Scriptures, to pronounce fairly to their own consciences, whether this Unitarian faith is pure and good and in accordance with what Christ taught.

What is it that has caused so much bigotry and superstition in the world, and allowed the most fiend-like persecutions and atrocities to exist in past ages, if not this blind and obstinate faith which entirely shuts out the light of reason?

With the purest and most benevolent motives have Unitarian divines examined the causes which have produced the effect of the Trinitarian Doctrine, honestly investigating every passage and every word, and not shrinking the responsibility of producing an intelligent interpretation of such words as, taken alone, have favored mystery, but by the light of reason establishing those truths which do most honor to God.

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I would have the Trinitarian ask himself these questions:

Is my religion based on the Bible through my own investigations, or has it been formed for me by fallible men like myself?

Do I consider that I am answerable to my Maker for my form of worship, or are the articles of faith agreed upon by certain clergy in the year 1562 responsible for my belief?

Would not reason answer, to God and God alone am I to be accountable?

Alas for the bigotry which jealously watches lest a ray of reason should be admitted in religious disquisition! Alas for the feeble mind which allows itself to be cramped by the dogmas of mankind, and to be frightened into a mongrel belief!

The very investigation so many Trinitarians pant after as the "hart panteth for cooling streams" is denounced as heresy, and they are arrested at the very commencement of their studies by the terrible denunciation which has doubtless kept and still keeps thousands of persons in an abject state of subservience to the articles of the established church.

By what right does man *dare* to assert that any one of God's creatures will be everlastingly accursed,

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when the Almighty gave power to his Son to pardon the greatest sinners? And above all, how can any one with a God-fearing, or rather a God-loving, spirit find it possible to condemn a man because he has, with all reverence, taken unto himself an opinion which has been honestly engendered in his mind by earnest thought and careful research?

I can but believe, in this tolerant age, that although our Trinitarian brethren have not expunged certain articles of their creed from their book of prayer, yet that they would shrink from the awful responsibility of pronouncing judgment on their fellow-men; but being told by their spiritual advisers, in many instances, and consequently believing, that the Unitarian doctrine is heretical, and knowing what fate has been determined by the church *for* heretics, they pause before entering on an investigation of a doctrine the belief of which is said to put them beyond the pale of salvation.

The teachers of the Trinitarian doctrine would seem to inculcate, not that the study of the New Testament should be neglected; on the contrary, they say "read your Bible; seek the Word of God," but that, having searched the Scriptures diligently, you must still believe, no matter how you may interpret the

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divine record, this doctrine established by a certain number of men more than fifteen hundred years after a simple, reasonable, and beautiful religion had been taught to mankind by our Saviour Jesus Christ.

What but a love of truth and consistent belief could induce a body of men to waive so many worldly advantages, and in the face of persecution tenaciously hold on to a faith which the great mass of mankind not only refuses to investigate or favor in any way, but which has been a subject of revilement, and the followers of which have been anathematized.

The Trinitarian will, it is hoped and believed, give far more credence to our Saviour's words, as quoted by the Scriptural writers, than to any which may have come from the lips of his disciples; yet even were this not so, there is not a single verse of the New Testament which cannot be reasonably interpreted. We will take one which is considered by the Trinitarian as entirely conclusive that Christ was God, and give to it such a fair investigation that it would seem impossible that any one who deemed himself competent to think for himself should not admit it at once as altogether reconcilable with truth and reason.

When Thomas, one of the twelve disciples, was told of the resurrection of Jesus, he was dubious, and

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stated that he could not believe such a wonder unless he saw the print of the nails in Christ's hands and feet, but when he did see the wounds he exclaimed, in utter astonishment, "My Lord and my God!"

Now, with regard to this exclamation the Trinitarian says: by this address it was evident that Christ was God, or Thomas would not have used the words, "My Lord and my God."

The Unitarian answers:

1. These words might have been addressed to Christ by Thomás in awe and bewilderment at the miracle he witnessed.

2. That since we have been told that it was a habit amongst Asiatic nations when struck with astonishment to exclaim in the name of the Deity, we have a right to give credence to the above supposition.

3. That accepting the theory that Thomas, in his bewilderment, really *did* think he was addressing God, it is still no evidence of Christ's divinity.

4. That supposing it were admitted as evidence, it would fall to the ground when the verse which precedes these words of Thomas is examined, namely, "Jesus saith unto her, 'Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say

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unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' "

If in the face of this evidence, my Trinitarian reader, you still cling to your belief, you clearly give more weight to what Thomas was supposed to have *thought* than to what our Lord *actually said*, and thus it would appear that you would rather impute duplicity to Christ than to admit one ray of reason to disturb your dogma. I use the word "*duplicity*" advisedly, for had he not known that there was a God above, at the very moment when he made the foregoing declaration, he would have intentionally misled his disciples, and have at once sapped the foundation of that truth-loving principle to the inculcation of which he had devoted his life.

But, says the Trinitarian, in what manner can you overcome the meaning of the following words, and how reconcile them with your belief, viz., "As thou, Father, art in me and I in thee;" also, "there are three that bear record in heaven?"

As before stated, we consider in the first instance Christ referred to the *spirit* of God which was in him, but even could we not thus interpret it, we could not

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in reason allow that [the hundreds of passages where Christ declares himself distinct from God were spurious in order to make way for a belief that is said to be supported in one or two instances by the scriptural writers. And with regard to the second verse above quoted, we answer, common-sense declares that either one or two passages are to be accepted at the expense of some hundreds, or that their sense must be submerged in the very many which contradict them, supposing the words "there are three that bear record in heaven" were not interpolated, which is a matter of doubt to many.

Are you still determined, my Trinitarian friend, in the face of this earnest appeal to you for a fair consideration of the truth of the Unitarian faith, to hold on to your belief without any investigation for yourself? Has no part of this address moved you to doubt whether there is anything contrary to reason in what you profess to believe? If not, then it might be said of you, that while you are in all probability giving the whole of your energy, and the full power of your reason, to scientific researches and mundane affairs, and are not content until you have satisfied your mind that you have arrived at truths or facts, yet with regard to theology you can give blind credence to the most

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monstrous invention ever conceived to mislead mankind in their religious worship, namely, that God is *one*, and yet *three;* that Christ is God eternal, and that the Holy Ghost is God eternal, and yet that the Son alone was begotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and the Son; thus demonstrating by this reasoning, or rather want of reasoning, that God gave existence to beings who were *co-eval* and *co-equal* with himself.

Reader, there are no half measures in a religious belief. We must each satisfy ourselves of the truth of what we profess, unbiassed by any foreign opinion. For what is it to us that a thousand learned men have by their writings established certain doctrines; what is it to us that poor weak men like ourselves have formed and sanctified certain articles of religion, and called them good, and commanded mankind, under pain of eternal damnation, to believe them? What is it to us that the whole world should pronounce such doctrines true, unless we firmly believe that they are so, and can satisfy our consciences with a proper reason for our belief?

Will it be to these learned controversialists—will it be to these poor weak mortals who have, in their big-

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oted zeal for the welfare of the church, consigned those who dissent from the laws they have framed to eternal punishment, will it be to any mortal man that we shall have to render an account of our talents?

If you still hold that a belief is acceptable to God if it is not intelligible to you, then indeed sad must be your heart at all times, for you are giving yourself up as a sacrifice to man's theories, and not to Almighty God; and since the conscience never slumbers, your religion, instead of being a blessing, a comfort and a joy to you, must be ever dragging at the tenderest chords of your heart, and, as I have before said, the question, "Whom do I worship?" must ever be knocking at reason's door for a faithful answer.

My dear friends, it is in the hour of anguish, and in the season of unutterable joy, that God's spirit tells us most eloquently of his unity. Yes, at those times when we prostrate ourselves at his foot-stool in reverent supplication and earnest thanksgiving; at those times when we leave in His hands the welfare of some dearly-loved fellow-beings, after fervent prayer for their safe keeping; at those times of imminent peril, when we feel our utter dependence on our Great Crea-

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tor, it is then that the self-deception we have been tutored to practice ceases to hold sway over our hearts and minds, we wrench from them the shackles of an unintelligible dogma, and alone with our Maker dare to give to Him, and Him alone, our adoration and our love.

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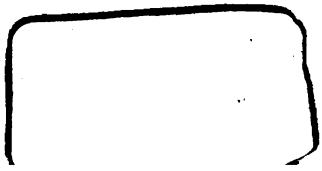

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